



STATE OF ARIZONA

JANICE K. BREWER
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

February 12, 2010

Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood,

With a weakened economy and a decline in revenues, funding for transportation services in Arizona has been reduced by 25%. Arizonans have seen significant service reductions with cuts in the state's highway maintenance programs, office closures and staff reductions.

Arizona's budget crisis has forced the state to greatly reduce maintenance costs, including suspending operations at 13 out of 18 of the state's roadside rest areas. As I travel our highways, I am disappointed by destination signs that alert motorists and tourists: "Rest Area Closed." The orange safety barriers blocking the exits to Arizona's rest areas may convey an inaccurate and unfortunate image of a state that is closed for business.

With many states facing budget deficits, rest stops on interstate highways, which require significant sums to maintain but provide no revenue to the state, are on the chopping block. California, Colorado, Vermont, and Louisiana have also closed or will close some of their rest areas for the same reason. More states are likely to implement the same measures as state revenues continue to fall.

The Arizona Department of Transportation staff is working to investigate all avenues to provide rest area services to our travelers, including the designation of privately operated facilities officially identified as meeting state requirements. Federal regulations and the economic downturn have hampered these efforts.

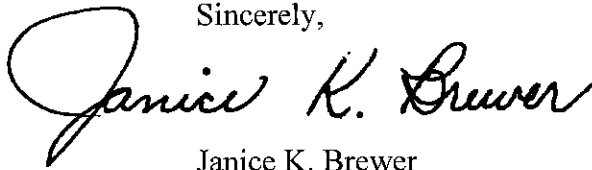
This is an important issue to the people of Arizona. Reopening rest stops would be of great benefit to all travelers, tourists and truckers. However, current federal law prohibits states with post-1956 interstates from privatizing or commercializing their rest areas. This law exemplifies how an outdated federal regulation places a heavy hand on states. In these difficult economic times, the law also prevents states from encouraging tourism and ensuring public safety on the highways.

Rescinding this federal restriction to provide states with more flexibility is the permanent answer. I ask that you work to repeal this restriction. Please be advised that in the meantime I am asking the Department to do the following:

- o Identify the impacts of opening high-traffic rest areas that provide the greatest benefit to the public.
- o Work with the State Transportation Board to identify any eligible federal funds to replace or reconstruct existing facilities to increase sustainability and to minimize future maintenance costs to the state.
- o Petition the Federal Highway Administration to allow for use of federal funds to operate new or reconstructed rest areas as part of the construction contract.
- o Continue to explore the use of innovative public-private partnerships that would allow for such programs as "Adopt a Rest Stop", modeled on our successful "Adopt a Highway" initiative.
- o Investigate the use of inmate labor to reduce maintenance costs.

Again, I urge you to support a revision to this existing federal law so that commercialization can be utilized to reopen rest areas where this is a practical option. I will seek the assistance of Arizona's Congressional delegation to accomplish this goal. The ability to use public-private partnerships to offer commercial services at rest areas can be a win-win for everyone. Drivers will have more options, commercial providers will have new outlets for their services, and the nation's transportation departments will have revenue to keep more of these important areas open.

Sincerely,



Janice K. Brewer
Governor

JKB:pg

Cc: Senator John McCain
Senator Jon Kyl
Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick
Congressman Trent Franks
Congressman John Shadegg
Congressman Ed Pastor
Congressman Harry Mitchell
Congressman Jeff Flake
Congressman Raul Grijalva
Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords
Victor Mendez, FHWA Administrator
Anne Ferro, FMCSA Administrator
John Halikowski, Director, Arizona Department of Transportation